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COUNTRY Austria REPORT NO. [REDACTED]
TOPIC National League-Association of Working Austrians

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1. Although still without substantial funds, the National League which more and more is proving to be a counterpart and opponent to Eng. Josef Heger's National Democratic Association, is very active in Vienna and Lower Austria. * It now concentrates on winning over former Nazis in which effort former elements of the Vereinigung der Unabhngigen (Association of the Independents) (VdU), such as Dr. Rinner's followers are lending support. Dr. Felix Rinner is an ex-colonel of the SS, and being a noted sportsman, he served as camp leader of the Marcus W. Orr Camp in Glasenbach near Salzburg while interned.
2. Meetings in Vienna of the National League are generally designed for ex-officials and university-trained people and draw large audiences composed primarily of ex-Nazis. Prominent among the spokesmen of the organization is Dr. Rolf Slawik, 5 Thalgasse, Vienna 15, who was born in 1917, is married, and who is a jurist by profession. He became leader of the Vienna Hitler Youth in 1938, joined the Waffen SS in 1940, and finally attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the SS in which rank he served with an SS court. Discharged from American captivity in 1946, he is deputy chairman and presumably also secretary general of the National League.
3. Austrian authorities consider the National League more dangerous than Heger's National Democratic Association. Adherents of the National League deny any financial support from Soviet funds. The National League membership in Vienna and Lower Austria is estimated at 2,000, all of whom are openly active in pro-organizational activities.

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Most of them are uprooted intellectuals who consider the goal of neutralizing Austria a means for economic recovery but, on the basis of their attitude, can in no way be considered disguised Communists. The National League established a newspaper, the Austrian Observer, in March 1950. According to its masthead, René Koch of Heinburg on the Danube River is its editor. It is printed by A. Luigard in collaboration with Richard Honetz, 35 Pfeilgasse, Vienna VIII and thus far the issues have appeared at irregular intervals. The National League secretariat is at 3 Schrottgiessergasse, Vienna 2.

4. At a closed meeting of the National League held in the Heumuehle restaurant in Vienna on 10 March 1950, Dr. Slawik made a speech which again demonstrated the pronounced pro-Soviet tendencies of the National League. The National League is the main topic of discussion among those groups of the Vienna population who have political charges against them. Slawik, who makes a good personal impression, is very successful in his propaganda, especially when one considers that in a number of cases he was successful in removing sentences against ex-Nazis. Several ship captains who were dismissed in 1945 because of their membership with the Nazi Party, received new appointments with the Deutsche Donau Schifffahrtsgesellschaft (Danube Shipping Company) (DDSG) when he interceded with Soviet authorities on their behalf. He also secured employment for ex-Nazis as high-salaried USIA (Administration of Soviet Industrial Enterprises in Austria) officials when they were no longer permitted by the Viennese labor offices to work as unskilled workers. This made a very deep impression in Vienna where political offenders are actually treated according to the letter of the Denazification Law. Thus Slawik finds fertile soil for his activities for the first concern of political offenders is earning a livelihood.

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